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TYCI: YEAR TWO

So, this is Christmas. And 2014, the second year of TYCI's existence, has been a big one.

We had the pleasure of booking acts like Girlpool, Swim Team, Ela Orleans, Manda Rin, Youth Man, Kid Canaveral and Skinny Dipper. We discovered countless new bands through our radio show and podcasts. We ran a special International Women's Day festival, raising money for Glasgow Women's Library, and our other events supported organisations like WomanKind, Anxiety UK, Shakti Women's Aid, Women For Refugee Women, Orchid Project, Scottish Transgender Alliance and Prostate Cancer UK.

We expanded our website and audio content (shout out to TYCI podcast listeners across the globe), and took our first baby steps into the world of film, hosting the Scottish premier of Kathleen Hanna biopic The Punk Singer as part of Glasgow Film Festival, and started a monthly film club at The Flying Duck. We laughed; we cried; we kicked some patriarchal ass.

None of this would have been possible without the people who support TYCI every day by coming to our events, contributing to our website, talking to us on our socials and generally sharing ideas with us. TYCI is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organisation, and we all do this because we believe in it, so we're glad that you believe in it too.

In 2015, we will be moving our monthly live events to Stereo, our new spiritual home, so it seems fitting to make our final zine of 2014 a 'Best Of', looking back on the mega year we had by gathering together some of our favourite articles from the past twelve issues to share with you.

Happy holidays and see you in the New Year.

WHAT DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO?

Gretchen King writes about the bizarre phenomenon that is women's magazine covers.

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Artwork by Gretchen King

The veil has been lifted from my eyes, ladies. And I can no longer look at magazine covers the same. Whilst in line at the grocer or browsing the magazine section at a bookstore, I find my eyes rolling and puffs of breath leaving my nostrils. Why have I found myself one foot-stomp away from becoming a charging bull?

It is because I no longer see these magazines as a fun distraction like I did many years before. I now see them as an enemy. Ask yourself: What have these magazines done for you?

For starters they pit women against one other. Would you give some of these headlines as 'advice' to your best friend? And if you did, would her feelings be hurt?

These magazine companies are not run by idiots: they know it's about what sells. And they will do whatever it takes to sell their product. Luckily for them, as a society full of self-defeating personalities we gobble up their product. A product that is steadily creeping up the list of Guilty Pleasures That Disempower You. In my book it's up there with

cigarettes. But at least cigarette packages come with cautionary labels. Maybe it's time these magazines have their own warning: 'May contain content that will add to your insecurities and keep you focused on things that really don't matter.'

I decided to channel my frustrations into creating a fake magazine cover. Indulging my photoshop skills, I tweaked the headlines of many magazines and unleashed what I imagine lies beyond face value. Clawsmopolitan seemed like an appropriate title (thanks bf for the idea) that suggests the clever and often subtle jabs that these magazines make.

Now, I recognize that Cosmopolitan is not up there in the ranks of trash such as OK! Magazine or the National Enquirer. Cosmopolitan was once incredibly important in the progression of women because it offered something outside of the confining norms. It helped reach women who felt they were alone in their desires and interests. But, what we need now is variety. Almost every cover of every women's magazine is incredibly photoshopped. Headlines suggest that there is something wrong with you because there is always something to be fixed. Cover stories tear down celebrities in ways that encourage you to pick a side. I'm hoping that if you can recognize the subtle jabs with the likes of Cosmo, then you'll definitely recognize the impact a magazine like No. 1 can have.

If you need a reminder of the lack of variety that covers often have, Google search '[Insert any Gossip/ Women's Magazine title] Magazine Covers' and you will realize that you've actually been buying the same magazine over and over. (How many times will you buy that magazine for the best new diet? If it was the best new diet - it would've worked the first time...)

I understand that for some, these magazines are an escape and no matter what I say you will go on supporting them with your attention and your money (Money that could've been spent on your latte addiction! Or a college education!), but I'm asking that you stop. I'm asking that when those magazines shame you for your age / looks / sex skills / weight / etc., you give those magazines a big middle finger and pass on thumbing through it, let alone purchasing it. I'm asking, at the very least, you take some time off from those magazines. After some time off if you read one again, pay attention to how it makes you feel. Do you feel more empowered after reading them? Or do you catch yourself deciding 'Who Wore It Better' when you spot two women in the same outfit.

Maybe you agree with me in my desire for more variety and cover stories that encourage the progression of women. And if that's the case, I've attached a full-size download of this cover for you. Maybe you'll happen to print it off and slyly leave it in front of other magazine covers at the stores you frequent. And maybe, just maybe it will influence others to see the absurdity in the messages we are bombarded with every day.

FOR MORE ON GRETCHEN'S WORK, VISIT GRETCHENKING.COM.

FANGIRLING OVER FEMINISTS

New TYCI contributor Nellie Gayle discusses women in music and their use of the tag 'feminist'.

Like most people, my Google auto-search will reveal slightly more than I would like it to about my neuroses and obsessions. Lately, all I have to do is type a single letter and the friendly Google will provide a helpful hint - 'A' prompts 'Amy Winehouse feminist,' 'K' populates 'Kate Nash feminist,' and 'L' will suggest 'Lykke Li feminist.' In the past few months, I have exhausted these search terms, swapping in the names of whatever artist I'm currently obsessed with in an effort to mine information about their statuses on women's rights and equality. Given that reading music blogs and listening to indie radio is my preferred method of procrastination, trust me when I say that I probably know the feminism status of most of your favorite artists too.

In my spare time (or whenever I'm pretending to do work), I run a fanblog for Haim. The fierce sibling triumvirate has quickly occupied my top spot for favorite band… Este, Alana and Danielle represent something unique from the other artists I fangirled over in the past. Watching and reading interviews and live performances made me realize that they embody the term I was most preoccupied with emulating myself - female badassery…

My love for music and my passion for feminism always manage to intersect in some ways, but generally in areas that cause more discomfort than happiness. Being a critical fan of an artist is difficult at times - how can you appreciate and truly love an artist if their lyrics and video concepts benefit from casual sexism and misogyny? By observing the various Tumblr and Twitter conversations that have coalesced around the themes of music and feminism, I've come to the conclusion that finding a creative space for women in the music industry, where they are not exploited or insulted, is rare to impossible. The female musicians who proclaim themselves as feminists discover an uneasy path between being an advocate and still allowing themselves creative

license and freedom. The comments one scrolls through after watching a YouTube video of a woman performing are appalling, and are enough to transform even the most hardcore badasses into shrinking violets (see the Guardian piece by CHVRCHES frontwoman / TYCI co-founder Lauren Mayberry). So when an artist says the three magical words "I'm a feminist" - or some variation on that theme - I feel ready to burst with happiness.

In a recent interview with the Daily Beast, Este commented that people don't know how to perceive strong women, and the scorn that accompanies the word feminist. "Fuck off," she asserted. It was like music to my ears. As soon as the article was released online, the Tumblr Haim fandom rejoiced - it was the closest the band had ever come to explicitly identifying as feminists. It was a cause for celebration of sorts. The Haim fans whose blogs I avidly followed were young women who called out patriarchal and sexist bullshit, and they all hailed Este's quote as a major breakthrough. "This is the closest she's come to self-identifying as a feminist," a fellow feminist blogger proclaimed. "I'll take it!" I was similarly elated…

There are as many iterations of feminism as there are individuals. I consider myself an intersectional choice feminist - or at least that's what my gender studies professor seemed to think was a fitting title. The Western feminism that only caters to upper-middle-class white women (like myself) is wholly unsatisfying to me. What if my

icons practice a completely different feminism than me? I have always viewed feminism as a movement that attempts to dismantle systems that tell women they constantly need validation and male acceptance. Yet I often find myself needing validation for my own feminism. It all comes down to the politics of representation. If the adage is that you can't be what you can't see, I suppose that hearing someone drop the feminism revelation in an interview makes me a little bit more hopeful about my own future...

I was constantly confronted with eye-rolls and sighs when I told my high school classmates that I was a feminist. As a college student who is lucky enough to attend a historically feminist institution, I worry that my feminist ideals won't be tolerated when I am confronted with the 'real' world. These women confronted the same stereotypes, and are actively fighting for new roles in the media, in music, and in everyday life. That makes me their feminist fangirl.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE (AND TYCI'S VERY OWN INTERVIEW WITH HAIM!), VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE OF NELLIE'S FAN-GIRLING, HEAD TO LOW-ON-KNOW-HOW.TUMBLR.COM.

GIRLS SKATE NETWORK

Lisa Whitaker has been a driving force behind creating a platform for female skateboarders. Shawn Durham speaks to Whitaker about her work.

What is Girls Skate Network?

Girls Skate Network is a website devoted to making girls skateboarding more visible. It started in 2003 as a test site as I was attempting to learn web design. I needed content to build the site, so I just used what I had on my computer at the time... photos and video of my friends (who just happened to be the best female skaters in the world) skateboarding. I never expected anyone other than my friends and I to see it, but shortly after it went up I started receiving e-mails from girls around the world who were inspired by the content… I remember what a huge impact seeing the few photos or video clips of other girls skating had on me growing up, so that and the feedback I get keeps me motivated to keep the site going.

You recently started Meow Skateboards, a company which sponsors and highlights women skaters. Why do you feel this is necessary?

I was at the X Games a couple years ago and realised only one or two of the top ten female street skaters in the world had a board sponsor that actually promoted and included them as a part of the real team, the rest of them were just flowed product. Hoopla

and Silly Girl were around at the time and doing a great job supporting a handful of girls, but they didn't fit the style of most of the street skaters.

How do you think the women's skateboarding scene has changed in the last decade? Where do you see it heading?

I think the women's skate scene is slowly becoming more and more visible due to the internet and social media… Funny thing is I grew up skating with all guys and I never felt different or alone, so if you have a good group of supportive friends it don't matter if they are guys or girls. My hope is that as it becomes more visible young girls are given it as an option to try, because in the past a lot of people wrote it off as just for boys.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON LISA'S PROJECTS, VISIT GIRLSSKATENETWORK.COM AND MEOWSKATEBOARDS.COM.

TYCI

TYCI loves books, especially ones by kick ass female authors, and we want to talk about them with you. Which female writer has had an impact on you? Which literature discovery changed your life? Tell us by emailing contact.tyci@gmail.com, and we'll share your recommendations on our social networks for everyone to discuss.

Book Club

SHONEN KNIFE

Sophie Kromholz went behind the scenes to speak to the iconic Japanese band at their most recent Glasgow show.

How would you describe Shonen Knife to someone who's never heard your music before? What's your sound and who are you?

NAOKO YAMANO: Our music is very unique. We are thee Japanese females. And wearing matching dresses. The melody lines are very pop and our lyrics are sometimes about cute animals and delicious chocolate. And if people listen to our music, people can be happy.

How did you get into music in the first place? What's the story of the band?

NAOKO: I liked to listen to American or British rock or hard rock when I was a teenager and then I wanted to do something interesting, because I was bored in daily life. I wanted to be like a rock musician like the Ramones, the Buzzcocks, the Jam. I asked my friend Mitchie and my younger sister Atsuko to be members and then started some gigs.

Tell us a bit about your songwriting process.

NAOKO: At the beginning I picked up some words, key words from my daily life for my lyrics and then I expanded to the lyrics from the one or two words and

then I put a melody line on it.

Who / what inspires your writing? Who are your musical heroes?

NAOKO: I like the Beatles the best. And then I am inspired by late '70s pop / punk bands. For our new album Overdrive, I was inspired by '70s rock and hard rock bands like Thin Lizzie, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple.

Are there any new musical influences or people you are inspired by that you think TYCI listeners and readers should check out?

Ritsuko Taneda: I like Teenage Fan club a lot. I like Glasgow music a lot. BMX Bandits!

What's the best part of being in a band?

Naoko: Meeting various fantastic people all over the world.

You have a very aesthetic image. Is there something you are playing with or trying to communicate with your look?

Naoko: If we go up to the stage with our daily clothes, we are not prominent. The audience are more fashionable than us.

Do you experience differences in being female musicians now and how you are treated, compared to when you started out in the '80s?

Naoko: I think from our side there is no change. Being in a female band is always easy and happy. But the numbers of female bands are increasing now, but in the early '80s the numbers of female bands were low. So we were rather lucky to be in a female band.

What advice would you offer to other women in the music industry?

Naoko: I don't have special advice for female. I don't mind female or male, but I'd like to tell people to keep making unique music and believing in their creativity.

Ritsuko: And please keep covering Shonen Knife songs. Especially young female bands.

What are your other upcoming plans for 2014?

Naoko: After the British and European tour, we go back and do a Japanese tour, and then have a North American tour this autumn. Then we might go to Australia and some other countries. And then I have to start writing new songs. Very busy.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON THE BAND, HEAD TO SHONENKNIFE.NET.

RACHEL SERMANNI AND HER NAKED LADIES

Nicky Carder interviews the Scottish folk musician about her other passion - art.

WHAT ARE YOUR NAKED LADIES?

They are normally ink drawings. Figments. Drawn on napkins. Scraps of paper. Sketchbooks. Walls. Last night I was asked if it is to do with a nervousness. A nervousness of nakedness. Perhaps it was born from that.

WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST INTRIGUING ABOUT THE FEMALE FORM?

Shape is pretty intriguing. The variation. The hips and belly. Shoulders. Breasts. It always feels like something sacred to behold.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO DRAW THEM?

I can't remember how the Naked Ladies began. It is a very pleasing line to draw; lady shaped horizon.

YOU PLAY IN A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT PLACES, OFTEN UNCONVENTIONAL VENUES, FAR AWAY FROM THE CITIES MOST MUSICIANS VENTURE TO. WHERE IS THE MOST INTERESTING AND INSPIRING PLACE YOU'VE BEEN?

An Tobar on Mull will always spring to mind when I recommend to fellow musicians somewhere to go that is sort of off the beaten track. Gordon McClean is a wonderful man and the venue is so beautiful. It is full of peace. And a favourite recent trip was to the Yukon in the northernmost part of Canada. We played at Dawson City Music Festival and I would like to return and stay there for a while. Go on adventures. Feel a sense of survival kick in. Living is too easy down here.

WHERE WAS YOUR FAVOURITE DRAWING CREATED AND YOUR FAVOURITE SONG WRITTEN?

Can't choose favourites. I drew on the wall backstage at a venue in Winnipeg a few months ago. It was my last date with Rose Cousins so I delved into my melancholy and drew a Naked Lady for Rose as a goodbye present. I was happy with her. I hadn't been happy for a while with the drawings. But 'Farewell Rose Naked Lady' did me good. On that same tour I was asked to write the music to lyrics that a little girl from London had written. She had called it Love Song and I put melody and chords to it in a black wallpapered hotel room in Regina with Rose's baritone Ukelele. The song is on a recently released album called 'Share some Air' which Nick Hornby helped instigate with the help of Communion through his children's charity organisation: Ministry of Stories.

ARE YOUR DRAWINGS AND MUSIC CONNECTED IN ANYWAY?

Yes. They are connected through me. Because it is me they come from. Of course, they are connected to everything else. Because they come from everything else as well.

WHEN CAN WE NEXT SEE YOU IN SCOTLAND?

Celtic Connections. I'm playing the Kelvingrove on January 31, [and I've got] some other gigs; one a Burns themed night and the other a performance with friends from India.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR PLEDGE CAMPAIGN AND THE NEW EP?

The new EP is called Everything Changes. Four tracks written over the space of this year: Two Birds, Lay-O, Everything Changes, Blackhole. We are releasing it with the help of Pledge Music which is a first of it's kind for us. So far it is going well. I hope people just keep spreading the word and that over the festive period, people keep pledging because I am so excited to let them hear the music.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE QUALITIES IN A WOMAN?

There are womanly qualities in every man. So it's hard to identify something in a woman that is not simply part of the balances and imbalances of being a human. I like an observant human.

FOR MORE ON RACHEL'S WORK, VISIT RACHELSERMANNI.NET.

New TYCI contributor Daire McGuinness writes about the ever-present problem of gender stereotypes ... But this time in Lego.

It's been a while since I was in tune with the world of Lego. I enjoyed the clicking, obviously, central to the satisfaction of Lego. And the building! Oh, the endless capacity for building. Not just the fantasy, but the practical elements too. The Great Wall of Separation between My Side and Her Side was the stuff of legends. Unfortunately my patience was not designed for little bricks. Mops and chairs proved to make greater defences, and anything I needed to imagine could be scrawled so much quicker than searching for that last flipping slightly longer brick - where is it? - ah yes, already a crucial part of construction somewhere else.

I am a scientist now, by day anyway, and that fact, as well as my advancing years, have caused me to only recently get back in touch with Lego. It so happened that a well-meaning friend alerted me to a well-meaning Guardian article, which in turn alerted the good people of the world that hurrah! - equality has finally been achieved, there are soon to be female Lego scientists.

The story raised some mixed emotions as you can imagine. Ostensibly, the whole project is positive. The brain behind this launch

is Dr. Ellen Kooijman of Stockholm, who noticed the glaring divide between available male and female Lego figures. She submitted her proposal to Lego Ideas, in which Lego takes public suggestions for their next series of mini figures and reviews those which gain over 10,000 votes. One of these ideas is then selected to become the latest product.

Of course, we can't argue with the fact that Dr. Kooijman wants equality for female scientists in the Lego kingdom, or that at least 10,000 members of the public agree with her. There are many more facets of this story to be argued with. Firstly, what's with the omission? There are already Lego scientists. This means that Lego went out of its way not to create a scientist with a Lego vagina (or, eyelashes and long hair, as are the characteristics of vagina ownership in Lego-land). Why is that? Is the concept of a female scientist so bizarre, in the 21st century, that Lego thought the public couldn't handle it? Is it because the scientific play scenes in Lego-land include Tokikita's Toxic Meltdown and Arctic Base Camp, scenarios which it is frankly insane for a woman to be in?

Perhaps it's a social issue - a question of the poor lady scientists just not fitting in to the Lego kingdom. In this latest Mini Series their only female companions are Pretzel Girl, Diner Waitress, Grandma, and Lady Robot. Strong female role models obviously, especially Lady Robot. She was initially built to be a toy, but it was clear that there was something she liked even more – PARTYING! Who wouldn't want to choose between being a toy and a 24/7 party machine? I shit you not. Let's not even start on the fact that apparently even robots need an assigned gender and acceptable roles to match.

The final distasteful whiff in Lego-land is that the idea to inject equality did not even come from Lego HQ. Lego Ideas is a fantastic marketing concept, giving the public the idea that they can choose and influence what gets cast in to plastic. In reality, it took an independent petition and min. 10,000 people's worth of market research before Lego even considered that they should balance the gender table a little bit. Not that they seem to be running with the idea, if Lady Robot is anything to go by.

Lego – enforcing gender stereotypes to children in to 2014 and beyond. I wonder how long until lady scientist decides to start a family and give up the silly lab game. Or Lady Robot gets a tramp stamp.

the only
fists we
raise are
in protest
tyci.org.uk

INTERVIEW: YOUTH MAN

Lauren Mayberry talks to Kaila Whyte, vocalist / guitarist of Birmingham punk three-piece Youth Man.

WHO ARE YOUTH MAN?

We're from Birmingham. I'm the guitarist and vocalist, Marcus [Perks] plays drums, and Adam [Haitof] plays bass.

HOW DID YOU GET TOGETHER?

We went to school together and have been mates for years. A couple years ago we were each going a bit mental and decided to start jamming and really got into playing and writing songs. I guess it was kind of a release for all of us. That was kind of the birth of Youth Man.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE YOUTH MAN SOUND?

Sarcastic, angry, jazz punk... Most of the time.

WHAT BANDS/ARTISTS INFLUENCE YOU?

Dillinger, The Breeders, The Flaming Lips, Black Flag, Minutemen, Dead Kennedys, M.I.A, Deerhoof... The list goes on.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO MUSIC IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I've always been into music. Growing up with two big brothers i had access to their CD collection from a really young age so pretty much grew up on nu metal and hip hop. My brothers played guitar too so we had them lying around the house so when I was about 15, I just picked one up and started teaching myself.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR WRITING PROCESS.

We don't really have a formula for writing. Sometimes we jam until a song happens, other times one of us will work on a song and bring it to the band and we'll all re-write it and add parts. A lot of the time I tend to write the slow stuff, Marcus writes the punky stuff and Adam writes the weird stuff. It's a cool balance!

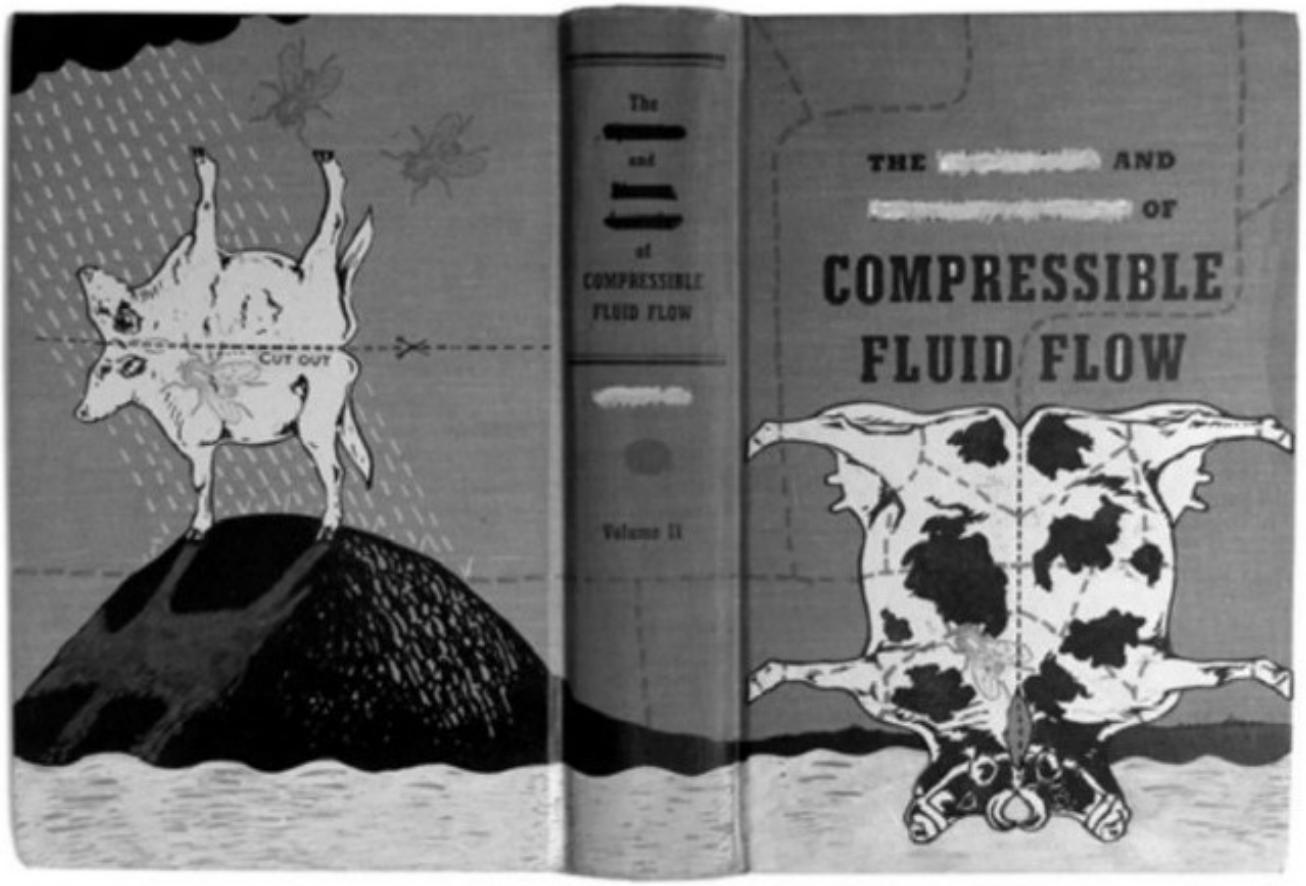
WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT?

We're writing a lot at the moment and working on our live set. We're really excited to see what we come up with next, it's looking very interesting..

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER WOMEN IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?

You don't have to show your boobs if you don't want to... More seriously, I think it's important to be taken seriously as a musician if that's what you are so don't let people make you the face of a brand.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON YOUTH MAN, HEAD TO FACEBOOK.COM/YOUTHMANBAND.



INTERVIEW: JACKIE BATEY

Gretchen King interviews artist Jackie Batey about her artistic process and influences.

The Internet has a magical way of taking one down the rabbit hole during an innocent image search. This holds true with my recent discovery of UK based artist Jackie Batey. While doing a Google image search for 'vintage b&w zines' I clicked on an image that intrigued me. This led me down the rabbit hole that turned out to be Jackie's collection of work. Jackie makes books and zines. Jackie makes whatever she wants with whatever she wants. Her work is a collage of materials, thoughts, and dualities. Her strength is how it all come together to form a cohesive style and a glimpse into the inner workings of her mind.

Whilst searching online for vintage zines, one of your image covers 'Damp in Ditchwater' came up. I clicked on it thinking it was actually vintage and was taken to your site with all of your amazing work. Could you tell me a bit about your creative process?

I use sketchbooks a lot. I carry one around most of the time. I also collect envelopes, stickers, and keep scraps in the back of the book ready to use. I carry a pencil case with felt pens, fountain pens, pencils and glue. I draw on my commute to work (if I'm

I plan in a sketchbook then draw or play on Photoshop, sometimes I collect together lots of photos I've taken previously. I have a studio in my home where I tend to have lots of things on the go, and it takes a while before one of them comes to the surface and I actually finish it. I love stationery and materials; I can't pass an art shop without buying a nice pen. When I'm on holiday I visit stationery shops to see if there's any nicer staplers or materials. I am a bit obsessive about pens and art materials. Ideas wise, I read lots and watch lots of films, visit exhibitions, travel etc. I do tend to react to the world around me. I'm more creative when I'm irritated at something.

And who are a few of people that have directly influenced you?

Visually : Le Dernier Cri (French horror comic screenprinters), Richard Hamilton, Modern Toss, Sidney Nolan, and Jenny Holzer. For Text: Joseph Conrad, Herman Mellville, John Milton, Agatha Christie, and Dorothy L Sayers.

I've noticed your work incorporates a lot of imagery from vintage ads and magazine covers. How did you first get started in creating art, and what led you to incorporating this retro imagery?

This all started pretty much when I started my PhD. I had used some collage before but I had (and still have) great access to an archive in Brighton (The Culture Archive) that is FULL of this kind of material. The Curator is a friend of mine and kindly puts aside things that he can't use because of their condition but I can. I also scour second hand shops and charity shops for old paper, withdrawn library books and other magazines that can be cut up. Although it took me ages (years) to actually be able to cut up a vintage magazine. I tried scanning pages and playing in Photoshop but it doesn't work for me. I NEED to play with the real materials/ textures.

On your website, you speak of creating digital versions of your books and zines for iPads and e-readers. Will this be a natural transition, or are you finding any struggles within this process?

I'm used to computers, I used to work a bit on programming CDroms, so I'm comfortable in a digital format. However, I just prefer the tactility of making pictures with glue, pens and paper. I'd like people to see what I make so by getting it online and available in various versions it expands my potential audience. I prefer the REAL books but I know lots of folk like viewing things via a screen so I'm happy to make it so they can. I have recently started using an e-reader and I find I read more now, both in paper and digitally. The nice bit about the e-reader is I can make the type huge and not have to wear glasses in bed but it doesn't smell as nice as an old Agatha Christie with brown edged pages and a flaky perfect bind.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG. UK. FOR MORE ON JACKIE, HEAD TO DAMPFLAT.COM.

Mary Timony

Bailey Constas interviews the Helium / Wild Flag musician about her latest project, Ex Hex.

How did you form Ex Hex?

I was writing a bunch of songs then wanted to start playing live. I started jamming with Laura Harris who's in some really cool bands in DC like The Aquarium, Benjy Ferree. I found Betsy in a few cool bands, she's an insanely great musician. We started jamming in this place in DC this practice space in our friend's backyard, just a bunch of hardcore bands practice there. We rehearsed a lot and started playing shows.

How does Ex Hex differ from your previous work with Helium and Wild Flag?

This band is really a gang. We have a different style. We approached writing the record in a different way. We are more of a band that sounds like a certain era of music I guess rather than something that sounds like an artistic expression. It's more of like a fun, rocking party band but with deep parts as well.

Then what kind of era would you say you sound like?

Maybe some of the songs are influenced by early '80s power rock. I hate the word "power" for some reason. Maybe some '70s glam like Slade, but also the songs are our own songs. I think this band has a classic rock and roll sound but I don't think were trying to copy that.

What was the writing process like for this album?

There was a lot of recording, writing, recording, listening back and rearranging them. We had the end product in mind. We wanted to make a record that's something you'd want to put on at a party, jukebox or listen to at home and make you dance around. Rather than just trying to express some artistic vision. I wanted the lyrics to be direct and understandable and not self-referential and difficult to

interpret. I just wanted the emotions to be more direct.

What was the hardest part about writing the album?

I think we had a really big time crunch. We toured to SXSW right before we started recording. Then in the middle of the recording

session-I can't remember who got sick first-but we all got sick. We were working all day and all night which looking back, I'm glad we did it that way but at the time it was insane. It's good sometimes but we were almost falling on the side of doing it too fast. Sometimes it's good to be pushed but you don't want to half ass it. There wasn't a point where we were sitting on it.

What was the most influential concert you went to?

Fugazi. In terms of just being a band live, they were just insane. I'd never seen anything like that again. The energy in the room was so intense. I don't know how much I tried to make music that sounded like them. They have their own style, but just the energy and that was around in those shows, I try to do that.

What's the strangest show you've played?

One time I remember on this tour when Helium was opening for Sleater-Kinney in Slovenia, everyone at the show was completely wasted. We played at this community centre where everyone was drunk. Old people and kids were there. At the end I was trying to get paid by their promoter and he was passed out. We had to load gear over him he was so drunk he passed out on the floor.

I always hate to point this out, because it shouldn't matter, but being realistic of the state of our culture…. Do you find yourself running into any boundaries being an all girl group?

I mean, I think we're all good buddies, and we love spending time together and have a ton of fun. You can have that with any gender, but it definitely feels like a gang of girls. But I don't ever think about people's gender I definitely don't think about my gender playing music.

I definitely have to say that in rock music, now indie rock, whatever it's called. It's so different now. There are so many more girls playing music than there used to be. When I was in my twenties, it definitely used to feel like you were a female car mechanic. Now it's like the same almost. It's great because nobody wants to think about it. I just want to play music.

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STORIES CLOSER TO WHAT WE KNOW

New TYCI contributor Oriana Franceschi writes about why Hollywood needs to stop being afraid of abortion.

It's a funny thing, abortion. Not as an act itself, of course, but it's funny that, as a subject, abortion can strike fear into the hearts of hardened Hollywood filmmakers: filmmakers who don't so much as flinch at the thought of showing us anything from acts of terrorism, to asteroids hitting the Earth, to the rapes and murders of living, breathing, out-of-womb humans.

The subject of abortion is a funny enough thing to be included in romantic comedy Obvious Child, which was released in the UK earlier this month. The film stars Jenny Slate (who you might recognise from Parks and Recreation) as a twenty-eight-year-old New York stand-up who gets dumped, loses her job, has a drunken one night stand, gets an abortion, meets a nice guy, The End. Her life goes on: in fact, it even gets better.

Obvious Child's writer and director Gillian Robespierre was compelled to make the film by "limited representations of young women's experience with pregnancy… We were waiting to see a more honest film, or at least, a story that was closer to many of the stories we knew" (my emphasis). And they weren't the only ones: the film reached an exceeded its $35,000 goal on Kickstarter, more than enough money to achieve its aim: to premiere at Sundance this year.

So, it would seem there's a demand for films that portray abortion in a realistic way. But so far, Hollywood can't quite handle the controversy of portraying women who have abortions and (gasp!) continue to lead happy, run-of-the-mill lives.

Generally, abortion storylines in big-budget American films

and TV have gone one of a few standard ways: a character's abortion took place long in the past but still haunts her; it is almost carried out but decided against at the last moment; a conveniently-timed miscarriage relieves the character of her agency, or it turns out to have been a false alarm all along; a woman who does have an abortion is punished by going through a life-altering, harrowing ordeal in the process…

Both Juno, whose teenage central character does the ol' walk-into-the-abortion-clinic-think-about-a-feotus-with-fingernails-walk-back-out, and Knocked Up - in which Katherine Heigl jeopardises her career by having a baby without considering abortion, even though she barely knows or likes the father - have been appropriated by the so-called 'pro-life' movement as a testament to the right of life.

Neither of these films are necessarily anti-choice or anti-feminist - after all, their characters have every right to decide what to do with the contents of their own uterus- but they do illustrate a trend in Hollywood films to make seeing an inconvenient pregnancy through the only viable option for a "good" central character.

This has been illustrated to a more disturbing degree in the Twilight series. In Breaking Dawn Part 1, Bella insists on continuing a pregnancy that is quite literally killing her (spines snap, knee caps crack, Kristen Stewart gets even thinner, for crying out loud), and makes a series of little pro-life campaign-esque speeches. It's all a kind of echo of Polanski's Rosemary's Baby except that instead of giving birth to the Devil she has Robert Pattinson's baby and calls it Renesmee, which might be worse.

So why is it a problem if teenage girls watch 18-year-old Bella wasting away and eventually being torn open to give birth to her dreamy vampire husband's baby? Because every year 750, 000 American girls between 15 and 19 become pregnant, while the UK has the highest teen pregnancy rate in Western Europe: these young women need to know their options, and they need to not be ashamed of them.

This has been a mixed year for abortion legislation in the US Some states have made improvements, like California, but more states, like North Dakota and Texas, have made abortions much more difficult to obtain. Closer to home, Ireland recently forced a teenage, suicidal rape victim into having a caesarean at just twenty-five weeks pregnant rather than granting the abortion she requested when she was seven weeks into her pregnancy.

Why does the American film industry contribute to this stigmatisation? Despite what it may think, the American public is, by and large, ready to see abortions portrayed in a non-demonising way. For the first time in the forty years after Roe v. Wade, the majority of Americans (54%) are of the opinion that, in

all or most cases, abortion should be legal.

Even if Hollywood isn't rolling with the times, its stars are. Mark Ruffalo sent a speech to be read at an abortion rights rally in Mississippi in August of last year year, in which he expressed frustration at mounting legislation intended to close every remaining women's health centre in the state that provides abortion services. He spoke of his mother's abortion at a young age, and radically suggested that women might be able to make decisions for themselves without having strange men writing bills to make them instead, "I actually trust the women I know. I trust them with their choices, I trust them with their bodies, and I trust them with their children."

As Joss Whedon's widely-viewed Equality Now Acceptance Speech, and Patrick Stewart's involvement in combating domestic violence with Amnesty International prove, sometimes (as Stewart puts it) "people won't take you seriously unless you're an old [or famous] white man".

There have also been a number of mass-celebrity petitions and campaigns over the past couple of years. They're kind of like Live 8 except nobody sings, and they are much more controversial because they make outlandish claims such as those that women aren't actually farm animals, and just telling them to keep their legs shut might not be the key to reproductive health.

The last couple of years have seen two of these: first came the A Is For campaign, which utilised social media to advocate for women's reproductive rights groups, using videos with celebrities like Martha Plimpton to reach the public's common sense via their funny bone. Later the Centre for Reproductive Rights launched an initiative called Draw The Line, in which celebrities including Meryl Streep, Kevin Bacon, Amy Poehler, Lisa Kudrow and Sarah Silverman urged viewers to sign a petition that stated, amongst other things, that ready access to "safe, affordable reproductive health care- including… abortion" is "a fundamental human right that no government may deny".

Alas, what American actors get up to when they're not on the big screen will never reach as many people as what their characters do on it. Obvious Child is a big step for those of us in possession of a womb (and, incidentally, a sense of humour), and we need more films like this making their way off the art cinema circuit and into the worldwide, big-draw multiplexes.

It's time for Hollywood to follow the lead of its audience, its stars, and its president and make honest films about abortion. 'Torture porn' is an acceptable genre now - what's so scary about one entitled 'Stories Closer to What We Know'?

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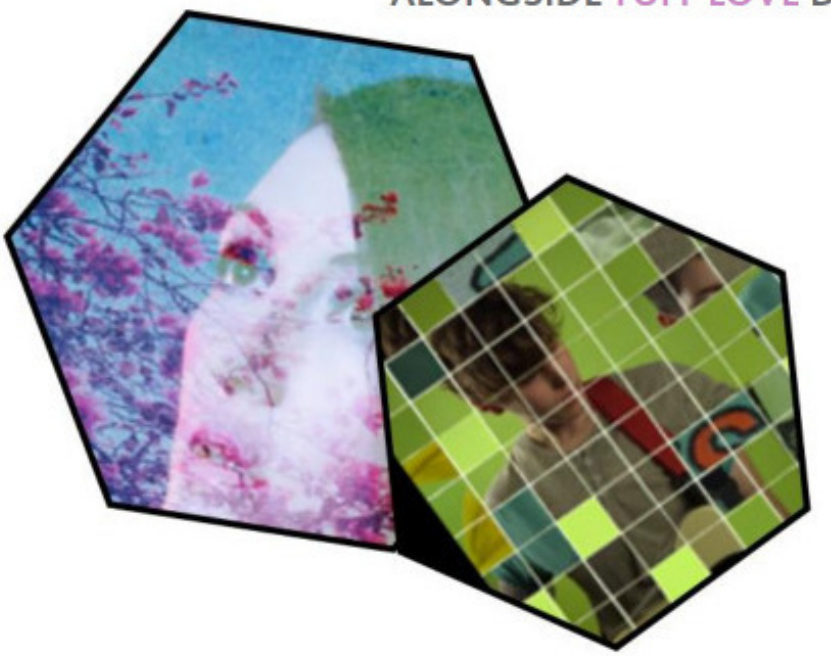

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